



Dear Friends,

Welcome to 2008—although readers may be forgiven for thinking that some of the articles in this issue could have been written in 1993. Alas, tired old beliefs about multiple personality and satanic ritual abuse have popped up in several places.

For a start, several families frantically called the Foundation in October to tell us that NPR's "Talk of the Nation" ^[1] was uncritically promoting a book by Dr. Richard Baer about multiple personality disorder and ritual abuse cults. Two weeks later, families faxed us a *Newsweek* article that uncritically promoted the same book: *Switching Time: A Doctor's Harrowing Story of Treating A Woman with 17 Personalities*. ^[2]

Are the "recovered memories" reported by Dr. Baer true? Unlikely, according to our review on page 3. Does it matter? We think it does because people make sense of their own lives by what they see and hear around them. If fantasy is presented as fact in media that people consider trustworthy, some people may come to reinterpret their own lives and problems in terms of that fantasy. Thousands of individuals and families were tragically and unnecessarily destroyed by the unfounded beliefs in the accuracy of recovered memories as well as beliefs in the reality of multiple personalities and satanic ritual abuse cults during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Can it happen again?

In this issue, you will read about the revival of a Toledo, Ohio lawsuit claiming abuse by a satanic ritual abuse cult, (see p. 9) and the conviction of a man in a Ponchatoula, Louisiana case that also involves accusations of satanic ritual abuse (p. 10).

On the positive side, new evidence in the West Memphis satanic abuse murders in 1994 may encourage another look at that tragic case in which three real children were murdered and the three teenagers (now men) convicted of the crime have spent the last 14 years in prison. (p. 7)

One practice that has not changed from 1993 to 2007 is

the hiring of self-styled "experts" to train police departments about the signs of satanic ritual abuse. In the West Memphis case, that person was Dale Griffis. In the Toledo and Ponchatoula cases it was Dawn Perlmutter who seems to have given new life to the subject by combining satanic ritual abuse with the threat from terrorism. (p. 10) As long as police continue to be trained to see the signs of satanic ritual abuse, there will likely be some who see such signs. Thus, we will probably continue to see occasional cases in which police rush to judgment and people's fear and anger explode in panic.

Lawsuits against parents are still going on. In this issue we report a case in which a Nebraska jury ordered a father to pay \$1.75 million (p. 8), and another case in which an Alabama judge ordered a father to pay \$8 million (p. 8). Both cases are being appealed, and in both cases, it appears that the judges were swayed by unscientific psychological testimony. The Nebraska case adds yet another spin to the notion of repression, while the Alabama case demonstrates that therapists' belief that they can detect sexual abuse from signs and symptoms is alive and well.

Why, when so much scientific research debunking these issues has been both published and publicized, do people cling to the beliefs of recovered memories and satanic ritual abuse? Recent research by Norbert Schwarz and colleagues at the University of Michigan sheds more light on the difficulty of debunking myths. ^[3] Indeed, some attempts at debunking seem only to increase erroneous beliefs. The subject has public policy implications far beyond the recov-

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ered memory fiasco. Schwarz et al. tested a flyer from the CDC that debunked some common myths about flu, but found that after a period of time, subjects not only reverted to the false beliefs, they then thought that their source was the CDC.

“Public information campaigns that confront myths with facts, or warn people that a given claim is false, necessarily reiterate the information they want to discredit. This strategy is successful as long as people remember what is true and what is false. Unfortunately, memory for these details fades quickly. When the false claims are encountered again on a later occasion, all that is left may be the vague feeling that ‘I heard something like this before.’ This sense of familiarity, in turn, will foster the acceptance of statements as true. Once a statement is accepted as true, people are likely to attribute it to a credible source—which, ironically, may often be the source that attempted to discredit it—lending the statement additional credibility when conveyed to others.” ([4] p. 152)

The difficulty of debunking false beliefs is staggering. However, a tremendous change took place in public understanding of recovered memories, multiple personality and satanic ritual abuse from 1993 to the present. We suspect that the change came about because of a focus on new research, a reframing of the issues, and the reporting of family experiences. All these gave the public a new way to think about recovered memories and related issues. Perhaps one of the reasons for the strides made is that instead of reiterating myths, the message was and is a simple one.

Some memories are true, some are a mixture of fact and fantasy, and some are false. That is true whether the memories are continuous or remembered after a time of being forgotten. The only way to know the truth of a memory is with external corroboration.

With time, however, there may

have been some slippage, especially because of the relentless repetition of these topics in movies, television and books. Thus, it is imperative that concerned individuals maintain vigilance and make efforts to call attention to solid factual information about memory as well as make efforts to educate those who purvey misinformation. Write, write, write. If your pen runs dry, get another.

In truth, we welcome 2008 in a strong position in respect to the recovered memory climate. Space prevents us from covering many fine new research papers this month or from mentioning the many helpful statements that have appeared. The recovered memory climate is more positive than not. But the reality is that too many of the ideas that caused the disaster remain lurking ready to pounce if given the opportunity.

As always, we thank you for your generous support that will make it possible for us to continue through the next year.

Pamela

1. Brooks, A. (2007, October 3). NPR, “Talk of the Nation.”
2. Underwood, A. (2007, October 20) Inside Karen’s crowded mind. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/id/57343> on October 25, 2007.
3. Vedantam, S. (2007, September 4). Persistence of myths could alter public policy approach. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/03/AR2007090300933_pf.html on December 15, 2007.
4. Schwarz, N., Sanna, L.J., Skurnik, I., Yoon, C. (2007). Metacognitive experiences and the intricacies of setting people straight: Implications for debiasing and public information campaigns. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 39, 127-161.

“What is memory? Not a storehouse, not a trunk in the attic, but an instrument that constantly refines the past into a narrative, accessible and acceptable to oneself.”

Stanley Kaufmann

College Counseling Center Web Sites

Readers sent only a few responses to the request in the last newsletter issue to check the counseling web sites of colleges with which they were familiar. We interpreted that as good news.

One person, however, did call our attention to a section on the Columbia University Counseling web site called “Ask Alice.” It contains the statement:

“To learn more about childhood molestation and its impact, you can look at many books on the subject. A good one to read is Ellen Bass and Laura Davis’s book, *The Courage to Heal: A Guide to Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. As you read them, see if anything seems somehow familiar. If it does, or if your quality of life is somehow compromised, then it would be important—in fact, an investment in yourself—to get help.

Clearly, the author underestimates the powerful suggestions in that book.

See: <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/about.html>.



Innocuous?

“The failure to heed Hippocrates reflects the assumption that psychotherapy is, at worst, innocuous. That naive trust should have been blown out of the water when ‘recovered memory’ therapy actually created false memories, often of childhood sexual abuse, tearing families apart. But the *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Therapy*, the clinicians’ bible, devotes only 2.5 pages out of 821 to adverse effects, even though documented risks of therapies could fill a small book.”

Begley, S. (2007, June 18). Get shrunk at your own risk. *Newsweek*, p. 49.

Skeptical Review

Pamela Freyd

Switching Time: A Doctor's Harrowing Story of Treating A Woman with 17 Personalities

Richard Baer

Crown Publishers, 360 pages

According to Chicago psychiatrist Richard Baer, in January 1989, a 29-year-old woman [1] presented to him with chronic pain that had begun with the birth of her second child three and a half years earlier. She had had a Caesarean section that was complicated by an infection. Unfortunately, a part of her lung had to be removed as a consequence. The woman, whose name in the book is "Karen," was depressed. She reported that her marriage was falling apart and that she had gained 100 pounds. Who would have suspected that her real problem was multiple personality disorder caused by horrific ritual abuse as a child? Baer told his patient:

"It's clear to me you're troubled by depression, ... and that this depression was triggered by the pain following Sara's birth, but is chiefly caused by the hurtful relationships you've suffered, and continue to suffer, throughout your life." (p. 67)

Switching Time has three sections and an index. Part one describes the first three years of therapy when Dr. Baer, who was then thirty-seven-years-old and in his 7th year of practice, treated Karen for depression while harboring suspicions that she had multiple personality disorder. For example, in August 1990, Dr. Baer writes:

"She's given me enough history now to know she has dissociative identity disorder (DID). I wonder if she has actual multiple personality disorder (MPD), which I feel is a better name for the disorder where a person has multiple autonomous discrete personalities... If Karen has MPD, our first problem is that the part of her that comes to see me doesn't realize it." (p. 29)

In January 1991, Baer interprets one of Karen's dreams. He writes:

"This dream is more evidence that Karen has multiple personality disorder, with separate adult and children personalities, and that our path together leads toward trying to make them disappear." (p. 34)

Dr. Baer has shown that he had clear expectations that Karen was harboring multiple personalities. It is almost inevitable that these expectations set in motion a host of attitudes, comments, responses, and even non-verbal cues in the course of the therapy that led to the expectations being met. The second section of the book begins in 1993 when Dr. Baer finally meets an alter. He describes his conversations with the seventeen alters that he excavated with the use of hypnosis. The last section of the book describes how Dr. Baer and Karen grieved the departure of the alters as they were integrated. Finally, after 18 years of therapy, Karen was declared well.

Hundreds of pages of the book are discussions with and about alter children. The many child alters describe the same abuse scenes but from their own perspectives and with different details. Reading about the horrific abuse Karen endured seems, at times, voyeuristic. Most of the alters are children. They tell Dr. Baer that they came into being when Karen was being abused. When the alters were no longer needed, they stopped growing older and remained that age.

"It's clear that many of the parts are anxious to communicate with me, and find it easier to do so by writing. What strikes me is how distinct each part is. Each has its own voice and its own concerns. Except for Katherine and Holdon, who aged as Karen aged, the other parts ceased to age and grow. At a different moment for each part, time stopped, and the events occurring at that instant, like for Claire when she was seven, are still occurring. It is as if some of the parts are suspended forever in a freeze-frame of torment. It

sounds like a definition of hell." (p. 147)

Dr. Richard Kenyth Baer is currently the Medical Director for Medicare in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio and he served as President of the Illinois Psychiatric Society. Not mentioned in the book is the fact that in 1989 (according to the American Psychiatric Association's Biographical Directory) Dr. Baer was on the faculty of the Department of Psychiatry at Rush Medical College in Chicago. In 1989, Dr. Bennett Braun was practicing in the Department of Psychiatry at Rush. Braun, as readers may recall, was instrumental in the spread of belief in multiple personality. The Dissociative Unit at Rush was a center for the treatment of multiple personality, but later Dr Braun was discredited. Dr. Baer makes no reference to this part of his experience. It seems highly probable that Baer absorbed some of his ideas about multiple personality from that setting.

Doctor-Patient Relationship

When Karen first presented to Dr. Baer, he writes of feeling annoyed that she seemed "determined to wallow and rut around in ... self-defeating emotions." (p. 11) He decides to focus on treating the depression because it will be a short-term task rather than focus on her more complicated personality problems. After one session during which he tripled the dose of medication he had prescribed for her, Karen stops coming to see him. Baer reflects on what he may have done that contributed to that.

After several months, Karen returns and Baer decides that he should try to empathize with Karen's hopelessness and helplessness. (p. 13) Karen begins to open up and tells him her husband is abusive. Towards the end of 1989, Karen sends him a note that he interprets as suicidal and he has her admitted to a psychiatric hospital [not identified]. Karen stays in the hos-

pital for a month and in a letter to Baer, she first mentions abuse by her father. "My dad used to make us [Karen and her girlfriends] take our clothes off and lie down on the bed. He tied our hands to the headboard with electrical cords, and beat us with his belt, the buckle side. The more we cried, the more he beat us." She claimed that she was beaten three to five times a week from age five to about 16. Karen says that once her father threw a meat fork at her and that it stuck in her thigh.

When Karen resumes regular therapy sessions, Baer believes that she is still suicidal so he stays in close contact with her. In addition to the therapy sessions, she phones him two or three times a week, sometimes as late as 1:00 a.m. Apparently the frequent contact with phone calls continued during the years of therapy. In 1995, Baer wrote:

"I spend hours on the phone with Karen each week listening to the particular day's unpleasantness, and it is stressful for me, too. I try to take her calls after my children have gone to bed, but then I see my wife's back stiffen when she asks whom I'm talking to and my answer is always the same." (p. 173)

Baer and his patient have a close relationship—they were together for 18 years. Although Baer did the actual writing of the book, Karen helped proof it for content and she wrote a few pages. Karen tells Baer "You were my real father, Dr. Baer; I never really had one until you." Baer replies, "I feel like I helped raise you. I was certainly a father to Miles, Claire, Sidney, and the others. [the alters]." (p. 341)

Hypnosis

After a year and a half of therapy, Karen reveals that she has had periods of time for which she can't account. Baer notes that Karen had given him enough history for him to know that she had dissociative identity disorder. Karen then reveals that she started getting an urge to hurt herself about a year

earlier. (That would have been approximately six months after starting therapy with Baer.) Karen tells him that one way she hurts herself is by sticking "a wire hanger up inside her vagina." (p. 30)

After Karen describes one of her dreams, Baer sees "more evidence that Karen has multiple personality disorder." In 1993, he writes:

"With all the history of lost time and her abusive childhood, I'm working under the hypothesis that Karen suffers from multiple personality disorder (although the part that comes to see me doesn't know it)." (p. 84)

Baer wants: "to find a way to communicate with the other parts of her that have remained hidden" (p. 102) He decides to do this with the use of hypnosis. He has been collecting material on multiple personality disorder and has a whole bookshelf devoted to the subject. Specifically mentioned is Frank Putnam's 1989 book "*Diagnosis and Treatment of Multiple Personality Disorder* which, Baer says, explains that multiple personality disorder is a consequence of abuse accompanied by extreme sadism, assaults with objects, bondage, burning and cutting. (p. 92)

"Because I know how hypnotizable multiple personality patients are reputed to be, I don't doubt that I can hypnotize Karen." (p. 103)

Baer paves the path for Karen to come up with alter personalities. When he first puts her into a hypnotic trance in order to find her alters he tells her what she will find:

"You may not have noticed it before, but there's another door to your safe place. Through this door we may meet some of the other parts within you." (p.104)

The alters emerge with lewd stories of abuse. Some examples:

"Just then a large gray hearse pulls up, and backs partway into the garage. Karen and Donna watch three men get out: Donna's father, Mr. Pankratz, who is a friend of Karen's father, and

two other men who help him when he goes to pick up bodies. The men go around and open the back of the hearse and pull the stretcher out that holds a corpse. Donna's father looks at the other two men, grins and winks, and then unzips the bag. The bag falls open and reveals the body of a withered old man who has, in death, an erect penis. Karen gasps and Donna screams. The three men laugh and Donna's father walks over to them standing between them and the still-open garage door.

"C'mon, girls, want to see a really stiff dick, a frozen Popsicle?....(p. 77)

"Take off your pants, Karen," her father says, "we're going to make you feel good." He smiles at her in an odd and cold way, and he tosses her coat into the corner. Karen pulls down her pajama bottoms quickly and steps out of them. She's naked from the waist down. A few of the men come closer and stare at Karen as she stands by the side of the table. (p. 78)

"They put us in ice water mixed with blood from a corpse. Then they rinsed us off and put us in the coffin. They said we had to die if we were to be reborn. But they were laughing; they thought it was a big stinking joke. Claire was scared, and she started screaming when they closed the lid. They would open the lid and then close it again, a little longer each time, each time Claire screamed, and each time they laughed. So I came out and I wouldn't scream. They opened the lid and I just stared at them, so they slammed the lid and kept it closed a long time. I closed my eyes and waited to die. I couldn't breathe I wanted to kick and scream; I couldn't stand it. Then I don't remember." (p. 163)

In addition to the abuse by her grandfather, her father and his friends, we are told that Karen's mother also abused her. The mother "scrubbed her face with a wire brush for putting on makeup" (p. 135) and "burned her with a curling iron." (p. 308) Karen believes her parents beat her because she was born with a tumor on her forehead that had to be surgically removed (p. 161).

Reason for skepticism

In 1990, Baer was not sure of the historical accuracy of Karen's accounts:

"As a practical matter for therapy, however, it matters less what actually happened—how much of these memories are real. These are the images in Karen's mind, and they, and the feelings associated with them, are real to her. Memories from childhood can be distorted, combined, substituted, and altered in a number of different ways. Although I have no reason to doubt Karen, and I know that children are sexually abused all the time, it still seems incredible to be sitting with someone who's survived all this. But I don't have to decide exactly what happened; I just need to understand what Karen thinks and feels. That's enough for now." (p. 26)

Are Karen's recovered memories of abuse true? Readers are asked to accept *Switching Time* as presented. "Karen" is not the patient's real name and there is no way to confirm events with siblings, teachers, neighbors, or others.

Evidence that there could be truth to the stories, Baer explains, is that in 1992, Karen's father was convicted of abusing her niece. Karen did not take the opportunity, however, to testify about her own abuse by him, which is strange. We have to take Baer's word about the conviction, since he provides no way for readers to verify the facts. Baer also presents a taped transcript of a conversation between Karen's mother and father that is crude at best and identifies the father as an unsavory character. Even if the tape is accurate, it is a far way from child abuse. However, Dr. Baer believes that Karen's stories are true, and he could see no reason why someone would invent such horrors. He is also reassured by her manner in telling the stories:

"I'm swayed by the utterly convincing way in which she narrates these

events on tape." (p. 85)

To anyone who has read similar books or survivor narratives, there is something suspiciously familiar about many of Karen's stories. They are stereotypical survivor stories. For example, in 1994, an entire issue of the publication *Psychohistory* (Vol. 21 No. 4), a journal noted for its support of recovered memories and belief in satanic ritual abuse, was devoted to the topic of "coffins". From one story "One of the worst memories I have is of being buried alive, and the sacrifice that preceded it." In the same issue, a psychiatrist from New York, Robert Rockwell (who later had his license suspended after an investigation of his treatment of patients for cult abuse) wrote that one of his patients had been raped, covered with blood and buried in a coffin-like box. She was later removed, tossed in a lake, cleaned up, and taken home. [2] During the early 1990s, such stories could be found in popular articles, books and especially on television talk shows. *Victims of Memory* (1996) by Mark Pendergrast has many examples of "survivor" stories told by the people he interviewed.

Although in interviews Dr. Baer has said that it was not possible to find confirmation, it isn't clear that he looked very far or very hard. It seems highly unlikely that the parents of Karen's girlfriends would not have noticed the welts and bruises left by being beaten with the buckle end of a belt. A meat fork thrust into a leg could likely leave a scar. Surely Karen's school work and attendance would have suffered from abuse three times a week from age five to 15, often taken out of bed in the middle of the night, brought to a funeral home, sexually abused, and put in a coffin. Wouldn't neighbors have noticed a child being taken from her home in the middle of the night on a regular basis? Wouldn't people near the funeral home be suspicious of so much middle of the night activity? Wouldn't teachers have

noticed a child whose face had been scrubbed with a wire brush and asked some questions? There seem many obvious holes in the abuse stories, unless one resorts to conspiracy theories.

A significant stumbling point in belief is the fact that Karen left her own children with her parents. Why would she leave her children with parents whom she has described as seriously abusive? Karen does make the point of explaining that she never left the children alone with her father but only when the mother was present. However, we had been told that the mother also abused her by scrubbing her face with a wire brush, burning her neck, and beating her. Certainly the presence of the mother did not prevent Karen from being ritually abused by her father and his friends in their small cult. Karen claims she hated her mother and wanted her to die as she was growing up. Even Baer relates that he often wondered, "why years ago she didn't run as far from her parents as she could get. She never has an answer for this — she only shrugs." (p. 48)

The fact that the alters and most stories were revealed under hypnosis is a compelling reason for skepticism about the stories related in *Switching Time*. The literature on the suggestibility of people who undergo hypnosis is vast. For example, as long ago as 1985 the American Medical Association stated:

"The Council finds that recollections obtained during hypnosis can involve confabulations and pseudomemories and not only fail to be more accurate, but actually appear to be less reliable than nonhypnotic recall."

Indeed, hypnotically enhanced memories are so unreliable that they are not permitted as evidence in court in many states. People who come to believe things while under hypnosis may claim specific and detailed memories, and they may feel certain of their

accuracy. Years of research, however, have shown that such confidence is unrelated to historical accuracy.

The most obvious reason for skepticism is that all these terrible things allegedly happened to Karen and she did not remember them. There simply is no scientific evidence that can support such a notion. Although belief in historically accurate recovered memories is frequently found in books and movies, it is just that: *fiction*. There are hundreds of scientific studies all showing that traumatic events and emotional events are particularly remembered. An article appearing *Scientific American Mind* [3] in the same month as the release of the book provides an excellent summary of the scientific status of “recovered memories.”

Alternative explanations

Baer admits that there is a controversy about the diagnosis of multiple personality. He writes: “Most psychiatrists have never seen a case of MPD, and I think a true multiple personality is quite rare, although many have been “suggested” into being by overzealous therapists who want to say they’ve treated one.” (p. 29) Baer tries to show that Karen’s multiple personality was not the result of familiarity with suggestive books or movies. He asks: “Have you ever heard of this disorder before? Did you see the movie *Sybil*?” Karen replies: “No, I’ve heard the term, but I always stayed away from those movies; I’m not sure why.” (p. 93)

Even though he is aware that MPD can be created and even though he is sure that he did not create it in Karen, it still seems highly probable that Karen and Baer together created the beliefs labeled “memories and alters.” First of all, from the start of their therapy together, Baer assumed he had knowledge about Karen that she did not have, that there were “secrets” that Karen had hidden. Baer would likely

have been looking for evidence to support his assumption.

“I want to understand more about Karen’s unconscious feelings, about the secrets she doesn’t yet have the courage to verbalize.” (p. 24)

In the early 1990s, Chicago was alive with stories of satanic abuse rituals. It was the home to “Believe the Children,” a group that held conferences and rallies about the horrors of ritual abuse of children. We know Karen had contact with this group because she gave Baer a card with their name and logo. (p. 130) People were supposed to believe any story of abuse that children related. Chicago was the home to Bennett Braun, MD, who held conferences and trained other doctors on how to use hypnosis to find the alters of people with MPD and to elicit their stories of ritual abuse. (Braun was later expelled from the American Psychiatric Association, had his Illinois license revoked for many years, and lost or settled multiple multi-million dollar lawsuits because of these practices, one in excess of \$10 million.) Given the fact that Baer had an appointment in the psychiatric hospital where Dr. Braun worked with his MPD patients, it seems likely that he was aware of and absorbed some of the prevalent beliefs—although Braun is nowhere mentioned in the book. It’s even possible that he had Karen admitted to that same hospital in 1989. We don’t know.

Without details to confirm, readers are dependent entirely on Baer’s stories. That can be risky as has been shown in many other books. For example, *Sybil*, long the prime example of a multiple personality patient, has been shown to be a hoax. [4] Benjamin Wilkomirsky’s memoir of recovered memories of a childhood in concentration camps, a book that received many awards, was later exposed as fraudulent. [5] Even Oprah was embarrassed by the falsities in James Frey’s *Million Little Pieces*. [6]

Baer provides some insights about himself. His career path indicates he is ambitious. Back in 1989, he is not satisfied with his suburban psychiatric practice and decides to move his office from the suburbs to the center of Chicago.

“If I don’t get out of here, I’m going to be looking at this same traffic in twenty years.” (p. 17)

He’s obviously looking for more challenging and more interesting activities. He tells us that he interviewed for positions as chairman at departments of psychiatry at three of the teaching hospitals in the city and suburbs. (p. 84) In 1994, Baer began to work for Medicare Program and saw patients just one half day a week. (p. 101) By 1996, Baer writes he had to give up his half day a week of psychiatric practice. Karen became his only patient and he met with her in his apartment. (p. 184) Baer writes that his work with Karen was the most important work of his professional life.

“Treating Karen had been the most important and deeply fascinating experience of my professional life. We’ll both be mourning [for the alters]. (p. 330)

With time, Baer became invested in his diagnosis and the stories. It seems highly probable that Baer was open to the excitement that a patient with multiple personality brought him. He portrays himself as a hero in *Switching Time*. And it seems equally probable that Karen was comforted by the diagnosis of multiple personality because it gave her answers for her problems in life, answers that showed that she was not responsible for her problems. Set in a social and therapeutic background that supported beliefs about multiple personality, recovered memories of child abuse, and satanic rituals, it’s easy to understand how such stories could develop. Indeed, perhaps this book’s greatest interest is as an example of a therapist’s thought processes

as he and his patient recover memories and create multiple personalities.

1. On page 334, we are told that Karen was 38 in 1998.

2. Robert B. Rockwell, R.B. (2004). One psychiatrist's view of satanic ritual abuse. *The Journal of Psychohistory* Vol. 21 No. 4, pp.443-460. He also wrote: "I decided to attend the next annual meeting of the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality and Dissociation in Chicago. There I met many other therapists from all over the United States... who reported similar tales of their patients suffering ritualized torture..." (p.447).

3. Lambert, K. & Lilienfeld, S.O. (2007, October/November). Brainstains. *Scientific American Mind*, 46-53.

4. Dr. Herbert Spiegel, a Columbia University psychiatrist who worked with Sybil for four years, did not believe that Sybil had multiple personality disorder, but rather her behavior was a consequence of her treatment by Dr. Wilbur. See Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1997, April 24). Sybil—The making of a disease: An interview with Dr. Herbert Spiegel. *New York Review of Books*, 44(7). The audiotapes of treatment sessions and conversations between Dr. Wilbur and author Flora Rheta Schreiber that have been discovered document the "fraudulent construction of a multiple personality." See Rieber, R.W. (1999). Hypnosis, false memory and multiple personality: a trinity of affinity. *History of Psychiatry*. The documentation that the stories of her real childhood do not match the childhood in *Sybil*. See Miller, M. & Kantrowitz, B. (1999, January 25). Unmasking Sybil. *Newsweek*, 66-68. (And some other news reports.) Memory research of the past decade that shows that the suggestive therapeutic techniques used by Dr. Wilbur with Sybil can cause the symptoms of MPD. See Piper, A. & Merskey, H. (2004). The persistence of folly: A critical examination of dissociative identity disorder. Part I & 2. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 499 & (10). Spanos, N.P. (1996). Multiple Identities & False Memories. *American Psychological Assn* McHugh, P. (1995). Dissociative identity disorder is a socially constructed artifact. *Journal of Practical Psychiatry and Behavioral Health*. Most psychiatrists are dubious about the diagnosis in general and question the possibility of iatrogenesis in specific. See Pope, H.G. et al. (1999). Attitudes toward DSM-IV dissociative disorders diagnoses among board-certified American psychiatrists. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 156(2).

5. In 1995 Benjamin Wilkomirski, a Swiss clarinetist, published a memoir entitled *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood 1939-1941*, describing his experiences as a child survivor of the Holocaust. In August

1998 Swiss journalist Daniel Ganzfried first raised questions about the historical accuracy of the book. Later articles in *Granta*, *The New Yorker* and documentaries on *60 Minutes* and the BBC provided sufficient evidence for the publisher to withdraw the book.

6. In 2006 James Frey's memoir, *Million Little Pieces* was shown to be highly fictionalized and Oprah withdrew it from her book club recommendations.



Satanic Abuse Conviction Falling Apart? West Memphis Three

Another ritual abuse conviction appears to be falling apart. After 14 years, the investigation into the murder of three 8-year-old boys in West Memphis, Arkansas is being revived. In 1994, in a rush to judgment, three teenagers were convicted of killing the three young boys. During the trial, both the prosecution and the media portrayed the murders in the context of satanic rituals including sexual abuse and genital mutilation. Emotions were high at the time and when the teenagers were arrested 200 residents of the small town gathered to yell, "Burn in hell!" Two of the teenagers (now men) are serving life in prison and one is on death row. There was no physical evidence linking the teenagers to the crime. A member of the defense team noted, "The first trial was pretty much a witch hunt."

In October, 2007, the defense filed new evidence: no DNA from the defendants was ever found at the scene, the mutilation was clearly caused by animals, and a person other than the defendants may have been present at the scene. A former New York City medical examiner said that there was no evidence of sexual abuse.

The prosecution case had relied on a confession of one of the teens, a mildly retarded boy, but it was full of factual errors and was given after hours of questioning. A prosecution expert, Dr. Dale Griffis, who claimed to have a doctorate in law enforcement and psychology, got that degree by

mail order from a diploma mill called Columbia Pacific University. Griffis is a former police captain from Tiffin, Ohio who in the late 80s and early 90s called himself a "Cult Cop" went around the country talking to police departments about the signs and dangers of satanic abuse.

The passing of time has softened the public's belief in the guilt of the convicted men. There is also now a more skeptical view of claims of satanic ritual abuse. Mara Leveritt, a writer who has investigated the case, noted how the climate has changed since 1994 and that it is now possible to look at the case again. "What I've seen in the past 14 years has been not quite a 180-degree, but maybe a 170-degree turn. It all comes down to 'Where's the evidence?'"

Dewan, S. (2007, November 11). New evidence in 3 boys' slayings. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. 9.

Leveritt, M. New evidence in West Memphis murders: Victim's mother believes defendants innocent. (2007, July 19). *Arkansas Times*. Retrieved from

<http://www.arktimes.com/Articles/ArticleViewer.aspx?ArticleID=f1b058c2-82ac-455c-b193-83cfce18215d> on November 11, 2007.

Stark, A. (2006, August 31). Life after death. Los Angeles CityBeat. Retrieved from <http://69.94.104.186/article.php?IssueNum=169&id=4287> on November 11, 2007.



Is This Really 2007?

"She [Marilyn van Derbur] started by saying that to survive the abuse she dissociated into a day child and a night child. Until she was 24 years old, the day and night children knew nothing about each other. 'I believed I was the happiest child,' Van Derbur said. She learned the truth nine years after meeting D.D. Harvey, a pastor. She said Harvey poked and prodded, trying to find the source of pain that he sensed she had."

Jones, C. (2007, November 9). She's a survivor. A former Miss America, Van Derbur tells crowd how she overcame childhood abuse, incest. *Journal-Advocate* at http://www.journal-advocate.com/articles/2007/11/09/news/local_news/local2.prt

Update: Taus Ordered to Pay \$242,000.

Taus v. Loftus, et al., Case No: FCS02157, Cal. Sup. Ct., Solano County. November 27, 2007

<http://www.law.com/jsp/ca/PubArticleCA.jsp?id=1165320505252>

In November, Solano County Superior Court Judge Scott Kays ordered Nichole Taus to pay \$242,000 to the remaining defendants in the case she brought against Elizabeth Loftus and them for publishing the article “Who Abused Jane Doe?” Taus and Loftus had previously reached a settlement in the case. (See *FMSF Newsletter* 16(4), Fall 2007.)

Elizabeth Loftus and Melvin Guyer wrote the Jane Doe article in which they countered claims of therapist David Corwin that Jane Doe had recovered a repressed memory. Taus identified herself and filed a defamation suit after the article appeared.

The defendants had fought the case on the grounds that the purpose of the Taus suit was to curtail their free speech rights—a strategic lawsuit against public participation (SLAPP).

Last fall, the California Supreme Court dismissed all the charges except one applying only to Loftus—and that charge was subsequently settled. Because Taus had brought the case but had not prevailed, she was responsible for the legal expenses of the defendants.

Thomas R. Burke, attorney for the defendants commented: “If there’s one lesson, it’s that the SLAPP statute requires counsel and requires plaintiffs to only bring those claims that could likely prevail on the merits.”



Nebraska Jury Awards Daughter \$1.75 Million in Repressed Memory Case

Doe v. Vella, U.S. Dist. Ct., D. Neb., No. 8:04-cv-00269, May 1, 2007.

In May 2007, an eight-person Nebraska jury awarded 33-year-old Jane Doe \$1.75 million in damages for the sexual abuse she claimed she had suffered as a child from her father, a former Baptist minister.

In 2004, Jane Doe sued her father for abuse and two churches who employed him for negligence. Doe claimed that the abuse took place from the age of 4 and continued until she was 12.

The defendants argued that the statute of limitations prevented the case from proceeding because in 1985 when Doe was 12, she had filed a report with the police in Springfield, Missouri where her mother had moved after divorcing Vella. No charges were filed at that time.

The statute of limitations for sexual assault in Nebraska is seven years or within seven years of the victim’s 21st birthday. The statute can also be tolled if a person has a mental disorder when the cause of action occurred.

Doe explained that after she had filed the police report and after subsequent counseling, “she completely blocked the memory of the abuse, the memory of the police investigation, and the memory of the counseling sessions.” She claimed that she first remembered the sexual abuse on January 8, 2003 during a counseling session. This was two years after she first remembered physical abuse by her father when she was in counseling for marital problems.

In 2006, U.S. District Judge Richard G. Kopf dismissed the claims against the two churches, but ruled that a jury could determine if the statute of limitations applied. He wrote:

“Based upon an extremely detailed affidavit and report explaining the scientific evidence supporting the theory of repressed memory, Dr. Daniel Brown is of the opinion that ‘repressed memory’ (sometimes called ‘dissociative amnesia’) as applied to child abuse victims like Plaintiff is well founded scientifically and generally accepted by treating mental health practitioners.”

“In my opinion, the ‘repressed memory’ illness described by Dr. Brown, a type of amnesia, is a mental disorder of the type contemplated by the Nebraska statute. Such an illness truly precludes one from suing since one cannot elect to bring suit if one cannot remember that one has been injured.”

The jury found that the statute of limitations could be tolled, and then they found Gordon Vella guilty. The defendant is appealing.

Herbert Friedman of Lincoln, Nebraska represented the plaintiff. Craig C. Cunningham of Geneva, Illinois represented Gordon Vella.

Father sexually abused daughter for years: Intentional infliction of emotional distress: Repressed memory syndrome: Depression: Judgment. (2007, November). *Law Reporter*, 305.

Stephenson, C. (2007, August 2). Anonymous v. Vella. *Lawyers Weekly Verdicts*. Retrieved from <http://www.lawyersweeklyusa.com/subscriber/verdicts/detail.cfm?page=USA/07/7160774.htm> on August 2, 2007.



Not Repressed Memories:

Alabama Judge Orders Father to Pay \$8M to Daughter

Louise B. Parker vs. Fred Blackmon. No. CV-06-4264-HSL, Circuit Court Jefferson County, Alabama, November 15, 2007

In November 2007, Circuit Judge Helen Shores Lee ordered Fred Blackmon, a vice president with Merrill Lynch & Co in Montgomery, Alabama, to pay his 35-year-old daughter eight million dollars for the abuse she alleged started when she was a child. The decision is being appealed. This was not a repressed memory case:

"I have always had my memories of being molested and tortured by my father and my paternal grandfather. I was sexually, physically, emotionally, and verbally abused by both of them. I remember all of it as if it were yesterday and some of the torture still goes on today"

Although no memory loss was claimed, the complaints and scenario seem eerily similar to those so often associated with recovered memories. The plaintiff, Louise Plott, claimed that she had suffered horrific emotional and physical torture from the time that she was five years old until recently. The torture included cuts with a knife that left scars and the insertion of objects into her vagina including a coat hanger and Barbie doll and Barbie playhouse furniture. She claimed that her brothers were also abused and that her father took videos of it. (The brothers denied this.) She told of being taken to hotel rooms where there were other children and many adults engaged in acts of abuse. She said that she had been forced to participate in the stabbing death of a young man.

In her complaint, Plott noted that she had been in treatment for and is still recovering from an eating disorder. "To this day, I cannot eat mayonnaise, anything with it in it, eggs and other foods that my father used in the abuse."

Plott never told anyone of these abuses until April 2001 when she was in therapy with Renee Peacock, Ph.D., a psychologist in Birmingham. In 2000, a pediatrician recommended that Plott take her young son to a child psychologist because of various problems. At the time, Plott had three children, younger than three years of age. Dr. Peacock worked with the family and noticed that Plott seemed depressed. Peacock later suggested that Plott also have treatment. As part of her abuse treatment, Plott stayed in New Orleans and was an in-patient and an out-patient on and off for about one and a

half to two years.

Plott said that she had never told anyone about the abuse because she was scared of her father. After she was married she claimed her father threatened to harm her children and her husband if she spoke.

The defense argued that nothing in Plott's claims was corroborated and that most of the events were absurd and improbable. They pointed out, for example, that she left her children with her father, a strange thing to do if he had threatened to harm them.

Twenty-eight witnesses testified at the trial. In making her decision, Judge Lee commented that four therapists had testified that Plott showed symptoms common to victims of childhood sexual abuse, but, she noted, experts for Blackmon could not say whether Plott had been abused.

James L. North and J. Timothy Francis represented the plaintiff. Allen Hammer represented the defendant, Fred Blackmon.



Satanic Ritual Murder and Satanic Ritual Sexual Abuse Again in the News.

Survivor Doe, et al v Gerald Robinson et al, Ohio Sixth Appellate Court, Lucas County, No L-07-1051, Trial Court No. CI 200502755

www.sconet.state.oh.us/rod/new-pdf/6/2007/2007-ohio-5746.pdf

Adriaan Mak

In October, the Sixth District Court of Appeals in Ohio reinstated a 2005 lawsuit against Gerald Robinson. The lawsuit alleges that Robinson participated in torturing a woman during satanic rituals.

Last year, in what recovered-memory skeptics may well regard as a travesty of justice, the 69-year-old Roman Catholic priest Gerald Robinson was found guilty and sentenced to serve 15 years for the aggravated murder of a 71-year-old nun. The murder occurred 26 years ago, and the evidence presented was scant and circumstantial. The

decision is being appealed. The murder charges came after a woman known in court documents as "Survivor Doe" saw a picture of Robinson in a local newspaper in 2003 causing her to recover decades old bizarre memories of having been sexually abused in Satanic orgies by a group of priests one of whom she believed was Robinson.

Some of the 2003 accusations made by Survivor Doe in a letter to the Toledo diocese involved the mutilation of dogs, being made to eat an eyeball, being put in a coffin filled with cockroaches, observing the murder of a three year old, being subjected to an abortion and being penetrated with a serpent to consecrate her orifices to Satan.

Although subsequently she accused Robinson and others, a lower court dismissed her claim in 2005, because it was time-barred. Nevertheless the Satanic ritual nature of the allegations caused the police to review the cold case of the slain nun, especially since three other women also claimed to have been sadistically abused in the seventies and eighties by men dressed like nuns.

In October, the Ohio appeals court decided that because the memories had been repressed, Survivor Doe's claim should not have been time barred and reinstated her lawsuit.

Robinson, a hospital chaplain at the time of the murder, had been an early suspect in the strangling and stabbing of Sister Margaret Pahl 26 years ago. His office was near the chapel where the murder had taken place and investigators found a small letter opener believed to have been used to stab her thirty times in a pattern that to some looked roughly like an upside down "T" but to others appeared to be a Satanic symbol: an inverted cross.

Attorneys representing Robinson are John Donahue of Perrysburg, Ohio and Richard Kerger of Toledo, Ohio. They have filed a motion asking for his

release on a \$250,000 bond along with being monitored electronically.

Court Reinstates Lawsuit Involving Priests' Satanic Rituals (2007, October 27). North Country Gazette. Retrieved from http://www.northcountrygazette.org/news/2007/10/27/satanic_rituals/ on October 28, 2007.

Yonke, D. (2006, May 14). Convicted priest's legal woes aren't over: Civil lawsuit accuses cleric of rape and torture from '68 to '75. *The Blade*.

Seewer, J. (2006, May 15). View of priests has changed since nun's murder in 1980.

Associated Press State & Local Wire.



Evidence for Satanic Ritual Abuse? First Trial in Hosanna Church Case in Ponchatoula, Louisiana Results in Conviction

In December 2007, a 12-member jury in Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana voted unanimously to convict Austin "Trey" Bernard in the rape of his 2-year-old daughter. Eleven of the jurors also found him guilty in the rape of a 12-year-old boy. Bernard, 39, is the first of the seven people accused of sexually abusing children in the former Hosanna church in Ponchatoula to go to trial. Bernard, who now faces life in prison, was represented by a public defender.

Ponchatoula is a small, rural town halfway between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. The Pentecostal Hosanna Church was started in 1975 and thrived with a congregation of almost 1,000 until the death of the founder, Louis Lamonica in 1984. Lamonica's son, also Louis, took over. It seems that the younger Lamonica had many problems with parishioners and also with his family. The parishioners started to flee until there were only 15 people left when the church closed in 2003.

Bernard, the convicted man, had been the youth minister at the Hosanna Church. In May of 2005, his estranged wife then living in Ohio, Nicole Bernard, telephoned the Ponchatoula Sheriff's Office to say that Louis Lamonica had abused her daughter

from infancy until she was three. Mrs. Bernard said that she had fled to Ohio to save her child from more abuse. She also said that the child, now five, had spoken up about the abuse during counseling sessions.

The very next day Louis Lamonica himself walked into the sheriff's office and began to describe sexual offenses at Hosanna. Lamonica, 45, said he had sex with two boys from the time they were four until they were 12. He said he also had sex with a dog. According to the *New York Times* (May 25, 2007), the detective with whom he spoke said that Lamonica wasn't confessing, but trying to be helpful. "He didn't come to turn himself in, he came to talk with us." Lamonica didn't leave the sheriff's office. He was arrested.

Lamonica and Mrs. Bernard implicated other members of the church, claiming they participated in cult-like rituals and raped 24 young victims between 1999 and 2003. Austin Bernard was one of the people named. Newspaper headlines blazed with references to satanic ritual abuse. Dawn Perlmutter, (see box) a satanic ritual abuse cult expert, was brought in. More arrests followed.

During Bernard's trial, two of the young men who had originally said that he had abused them recanted and testified that they had not been abused. The two young men, however, had previously written detailed accounts of their abuse in a journal. Indeed, Bernard had also written in a journal about abusing children in rituals. The prosecution minimized the sensational aspects of the ritual abuse accusations. No physical evidence of either ritual or abuse was found.

Perhaps more information about what actually happened at Hosanna will come to light in future trials. For now, it is intriguing to note that one of the young men testified that his original statements had been coerced. He believed that a parishioner named Lois Mowbray had influenced him. He said

that Mowbray directed his mother to make him write down incidents of abuse. He said that the women would suggest topics to the boys and then they were supposed to fill in the details. Mowbray, who was arrested but not tried, had a 586-page journal in which she allegedly encouraged parishioners, both victims and perpetrators, to write about sexual abuse. At least one report has noted that Mowbray was involved with infighting among members of the congregation.

Dawn Perlmutter, Ph.D., is the author of *Investigating Religious Terrorism and Ritualistic Crimes* (2004) and frequently travels to police departments to train them to fight occult and religious-based crimes. She claims to be an expert in both satanic ritual abuse and terrorism and has been involved in two of the satanic ritual abuse cases described in this newsletter: the Ponchatoula case in Louisiana and the Reverend Robinson case in Toledo, Ohio.

Perlmutter was an Assistant Professor of Art and Philosophy at Cheney University in Pennsylvania. In 2001, she founded and became the Director of the Institute for the Research of Organized & Ritual Violence. She believes that ritualistic crimes are becoming more and more common. An excerpt from her book:

"One of the most controversial and heinous crimes entailing systematic indoctrination techniques is Satanic Ritual Abuse. Although there are numerous psychological interviews, police reports and physical evidence of survivors of ritual abuse, the extreme denial of these crimes has made it almost impossible to prosecute offenders. For every anti-cult expert who testifies to the existence of traditional Satanists, there are 10 cult apologists who will testify that these are accusations of a 'Satanic panic' or 'witch hunts' and attribute them to false memories suggested to the victim by a psychologist with an over-active imagination." Page 324

(2005, October 26). Ohio officers trained in religious, occult crimes. Retrieved from <http://www.officer.com/publication/printer.jsp?id=26587> on December 11, 2007.

(We thank Diane Vera for calling attention to this information.)

Reporter Debra Lemoine has covered the Ponchatoula case for the *Baton Rouge Advocate*. The articles can be found on the paper's web site.

Lemoine, D. (2007, August 15, 2007). Hosanna Church child-rape allegations called into question. *The Advocate*, 1B.

Lyman, R. (2005, May 25). Sex charges follow a church's collapse *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/25/national/25church.html>? On December 5, 2007.

Lemoine, D. (2007, December 4). Man gets 35 years in sex crime case. *The Advocate*.com. Retrieved from www.theadvocate.com/news/livingston_tangipahoa/ on December 11, 2007.



Barry Lane Beyerstein 1947 - 2007

With sadness we note the sudden passing last June of Barry Beyerstein, professor of psychology at Simon Fraser University.

Barry's interest in exposing pseudoscientific therapies made him a person of choice to be contacted by older Canadian parents, especially those living in the Vancouver BC area who, in the early nineties had been falsely accused of child sexual abuse. They found him understanding of their plight and knowledgeable about the therapies that had caused their troubled adult daughters and sons following memory manipulations to concoct false accusations. See his "Why Do Bogus Therapies Seem to Work?" *The Skeptical Inquirer*. September/October 1997. Pages 29-34.

With his colleague James Ogloff, he wrote: "Hidden Memories: Fact or Fantasy?" published in R. A. Baker (ed.), *Child Sexual Abuse and False Memory Syndrome*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. (1998) In 2001 he wrote "Fringe Psychotherapies: The Public at Risk." *The Scientific Review of Alternative Medicine*, 5(2), 5-13. For obituaries about Dr. Beyerstein see: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/lives-lived/The_Globe_and_Mail, Tuesday, November 13, 2007. <http://www.csicop.org/list/listarchive/msg00541.html> *The Skeptical Inquirer*, October 2007.

Adriaan J.W. Mak, London ON Canada



OPINION:

Recent public inquiries ought to change the manner in which Canadian courts address dubious accusations of child abuse.

Adriaan Mak

In the early nineties, both falsely accused families and Canada's lower courts became aware of the rampant increase of wrongful accusations of child abuse. Not so Canada's Supreme Court. But recent events involving false accusations should lead to a change of attitude by the Supreme Court.

The first set of events involves an inquiry into the work of former Ontario coroner, Dr. Charles Smith, who testified in a case 16 years ago against a 12-year-old girl accused of manslaughter in the death of a child she had been babysitting. Smith had incorrectly determined that the 16-month-old girl had died from shaken baby syndrome when in fact she had suffered from an accidental head injury.

Smith went on to err in 19 and possibly even more cases. Twelve of the cases in which he testified resulted in criminal convictions. Indeed, the government is currently reviewing 40 other suspicious child deaths in which Smith was involved.

Smith's most egregious testimony involved William Mullins-Johnson, presently 35 years old. In 1994, Mullins-Johnson was wrongly convicted of sodomizing and strangling his four-year-old niece. No solid forensic evidence of sodomy or strangling linked him to the crime, but he was found guilty on both of these counts based solely on testimony from Dr. Smith. The little girl in fact died from choking on her own vomit caused by a chronic stomach ailment.

A second inquiry involving false accusations of child abuse is pointing a spotlight at Cornwall, Ontario. There have been three investigations examining claims of a sex ring allegedly oper-

ating since the 1950's in Cornwall. The latest investigation, a thorough public inquiry ordered by Ontario's current Attorney General, began in February 2006 and it is probing the manner in which authorities handled allegations of child sex abuse in the early nineties. To date this inquiry has cost the government \$12 million.

Perry Dunlop, a former Cornwall police officer, has been a key witness in the investigation. Dunlop has been exposed as conducting a veritable witch hunt and he has been found guilty of contempt of court because he refused to testify at this latest investigation. Ron Leroux is another key witness. He has recanted his previous affidavits and statements. He said that he made up the allegations of a pedophile "clan" that engaged in absurd ritual sexual abuses. The Cornwall inquiry plods on.

Canada's Supreme Court and the case of B.D. and family.

A recent Canadian Supreme Court decision demonstrates its misunderstanding or ignorance of the suggestive questioning and misguided therapy offered to suspected victims of childhood sexual abuse during the late 1980s and early 1990s. What has been learned from the inquiries has not filtered up to that court.

On July 27, 2007 The Canadian Supreme Court ruled in the matter of *Syl Apps Secure Treatment Centre and B [social worker] v. B.D. and family* that Children's Aid societies, treatment centers or social workers owe no duty of care to the families of the children that they apprehend.

Those who knew the family involved in this case intimately, such as the family physician, the parish priest, and Sunday school teachers testified that D's daughter, R.D. was surrounded by love and care. She was a highly imaginative and very studious girl, although shy and quiet in class. The girl wrote a fictional story for a class assignment. The teacher was con-

cerned about what she wrote because the events were beyond normal child experiences, and the teacher contacted social workers. Thus began a chain of events that could have been avoided if it were not for mistaken notions about memories of child sexual abuse.

Soon the police and child welfare authorities were alerted. The girl was not allowed to return to the safety of her family. Instead she was placed in the very unsafe environment of a foster home, and this led her to the first of a number of suicide attempts.

No one in charge could see that the girl longed to be reunited with her parents and siblings. Ignoring her wishes led to serious consequences.

Separated from her family and repeatedly questioned by child-care workers, the girl in time came to believe that her family was the cause of her developing illnesses and that she had indeed had been abused. Even though subsequent police investigations corroborated that the girl's story was fictional, she was not sent home.

By the time she was 18, the girl refused to have contact with her parents, grandmother or siblings. She refused even though she was told that her parents had never been charged with abuse or neglect. As far as the parents know, their daughter is still under treatment for mental illness. They believe this illness would have been less severe if she had not been ripped from her family.

Over the years the D family took their case through every legal step that was available in an attempt to get justice. They did this at enormous expense, both financial and emotional.

In this latest decision, the Supreme Court justices again failed to recognize that in the early nineties suggestive therapies and interviews resulted in false accusations of abuse, causing havoc to many Canadian families. Instead, the latest decision gives social workers carte blanche in dealing with suspected cases of child abuse.

All is not over yet for the D family. The family is now facing a legal suit that requires them to pay for the court costs incurred by the agency that took away their daughter.

FMS Foundation Newsletter Fall 2007, Volume 16 No. 4 dealing with: Syl Apps Secure Treatment Centre and B [social worker] v. B.D and family, Supreme Court of Canada. <http://scc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/2007/2007scc38/2007scc38.html>

"The Traumatic Impact of Child Sexual Abuse: A Conceptualization" (1985), 55 *Amer. J. Orthopsychiat.* 530; and Summit, Roland C. "The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome" (1983), 7 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 17.

Adriaan Mak is the Canadian contact for people falsely accused of child sexual abuse.

F R O M O U R

— R E A D E R S

We Wish!

Our daughter, a returner, is now living near us, and we all get along well. We never bring the "subject" up, however. I suppose that is because we are afraid to. How we wish that it could be resolved.

A mom



Conflicted

Thanks for all the help the Foundation has given. My daughter is doing very well. But at the same time, I am really concerned about monitoring mental health professionals so that another FMS fiasco does not happen. I would like to see my daughter go after the unlicensed so called "professionals" who harmed her and to confront them. But I have not attacked that yet. We are all getting along so well and none of us seems to want to rock the boat. Time will tell.

A thankful mom



After 20 Years

Although my daughter retracted her accusations in 2000, it was only

this past summer that she felt comfortable enough for me to go and visit her.

A few months before our visit, her sister had gone out to give her some support while her husband had some medical tests done. I couldn't go at that time because of work.

My flight out seemed to take forever because it was delayed 11 1/2 hours. It was so late that I had to stay at a hotel the first night because no one could pick me up. In addition to that, my luggage was lost. But then...

I can't tell you the joy I felt when my daughter came out of the door of her home to greet me. She hugged me, told me that she loved me, and said that it had been too long. We had a wonderful week together touring the area and just hanging out.

After 20 years the door is finally closed on a terrible period.

I thank the Foundation and all of the FMSF families in our area for all the support they have given us over these difficult years.

A grateful mom



After 15 Years

After 15 years, it's about time that I thank all of you for being my lifesaver. I received "my letter" late in 1991. I couldn't believe it. I even thought I might have lost my mind. I accidentally discovered the FMS

Coming in March

A new television series about a family in which a mother suffers from multiple personality disorder is scheduled to debut in March. Called "The United States of Tara" the program is about a woman's struggles to balance her dissociative identity disorder with raising two teenagers. It is listed as a comedy and comes from Steven Spielberg and DreamWorks. It is said to be a "family comedy with a big twist." — a kind of Weeds meets *Sybil*. Another description is like "Sybil with a laugh track."

Hughes, R.J. (2007, December 7). A film finds a fresh take on teen life. *Wall Street Journal* W5.

Foundation in 1992 when we were visiting Kansas City. There was an article in the paper that mentioned you. I wasn't crazy after all—there were others being falsely accused.

The accusation split the family apart. My middle son stayed with me and my accusing son would have nothing to do with him. My youngest son left me.

Now for the good news: All my kids are back!

Two years ago, my youngest son (age 41) wrote and said he wanted to see me. His only stipulation was that we were not to talk about the accusing son. Since then we have seen each other regularly and I have met my two grandchildren for the first time.

Then, this summer, my accusing son wrote and wanted to see me. We met in a restaurant and had a great conversation. We did not talk about the accusation. He is a returner, not a retractor. That's OK with me.

A happy dad



Loss and Gain

I thought readers might like to know that my son is back with me. After many years of no contact, he somehow heard that his father was very ill and called to see if he could visit him. Because I knew how close they had once been, I said "Yes." I'm glad I did. His father passed away soon after.

I lost my husband after being together for sixty years. But I have regained my son who has been very kind to me. I am glad for this much.

Always a mom



Letter to NPR

I happened to save the Foundation October 10 letter to NPR challenging the claims about MPD in the new book by Richard Baer. That letter ended up being very useful to me.

The retirement community I live in shows several movies every week. To

my horror, I discovered they had scheduled *Sybil* with the following statement, "Awe-inspiring and brutal drama based on a real-life story of a disturbed young woman who suffers from multiple personality behavior."

I called a psychiatrist who lives here to find out if he would provide professional backing for me if I needed it in my effort to either stop the showing of the movie or, at the least, allow me to explain to the audience that it is a hoax before the movie began. He had not seen the notice about the showing of the movie but his reaction was marvelously reassuring. He encouraged me to try and stop it and offered his full support if I needed it. Then I called the head of the movie committee and it turned out she had no idea the movie was a hoax, but she knew all about FMS because one of her close friends had a daughter who had been caught up in it. Mission accomplished with the help of your letter to NPR, which I gave her. You never know how effective something can turn out to be.

Just for the record, my 29 year old grandson, who was nine when I last saw him, has been so thoroughly brain washed that he won't answer my letters even when I told him I would give anything in the world to see him while I am still active and functioning in spite of my on-going four and a half year battle with lung cancer. Oh how I desperately wish there were some way to get through to him. I hope things have gotten better for most families.

A mom and grandmom



Burgus Family: Ten Years Later.

On October 31, 1997, we signed the settlement papers for the lawsuit with Bennett Braun, M.D., Elva Poznanski, M.D., and Rush Presbyterian Hospital.

October 31, 2007, Mike and I are living in Madison County, Iowa—home of the Bridges of Madison County. Mike works in Des Moines

and I am recovering from meningitis and encephalitis I had in 2005.

John Paul lives near us and works as a Field Agent for the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic Men's Fraternal Organization. He is a licensed Insurance Agent and sells Knights of Columbus Insurance to Fraternal members. John is now 27 years old.

Mikey, 25-years-old, lives in Florida and is going to be attending school there. He has been asking me a lot of questions about diamonds and weddings... Hummm.

10 years—Sometimes it feels like yesterday, sometimes it feels like a million years ago. Some things have changed in the Mental Health Professions, some things stay the same.

I hope and pray our settlement has made a difference for the mental health profession, or for one woman, one family, one lawsuit. I would do it all over again if it helped even one person or one life. Yes, we would do it all again if it helped someone.

A dear friend of mine who went through much of what I experienced told me, "It was the worst experience of my life, but through it all, I have met some of the best people." I must agree. I would NEVER have chosen this path for my children, for my family or for myself—but, I have indeed met some beautiful people on this path.

God Bless each and every one of you and thank you for sharing this walk with us.

With deep love,

Patty and Mike Burgus



I Survived FMS

I am a survivor of False Memory Syndrome (FMS). My story of FMS and my recovery is lengthy, but I will try to tell it succinctly.

I went into therapy for depression in the mid to late 80's when I was in my early twenties. Someone I met in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting had referred me to a therapist. (At that

time I was and still am a recovering addict/alcoholic.) I went into therapy with much naiveté and trust. The operative word here is trust. In my first therapy session, we discussed many of the things that were going on. I mentioned my past history of a diagnosis of bipolar affective disorder and the fact that I heard voices periodically. But the therapist believed that I suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of sexual abuse as a child. This happened in one session! I was young and innocent. It never occurred to me to question a professional. I bought into the therapist's line of thinking.

This diagnosis was quickly reinforced by a psychiatrist who told me that the voices I was hearing were different alter personalities. In retrospect, that seems far fetched, but I had been suffering a great deal at the time and this seemed to be a valid reason for many of my troubles. The therapy that was to commence was both brutal and painful and provided no real help whatsoever. Recovering "memories" of incest is bad enough, but over the next 8 years, I endured the creation of about 60 alter personalities. The therapy included hypnosis and the construction of memories of satanic ritual abuse and childhood sexual abuse. I learned a lot about self-hypnosis and after a period of time the "memories" became spontaneous. Recovering new "memories" led to crisis after crisis. This "crisis and victim" mentality made me more and more dependent on my therapist.

The memories were as extreme as having been forced to assist in the black mass ritual sacrifice of children and then forced to eat their hearts and drink their blood. Others included having been buried alive with snakes for days. I am shaking as I write this. Those images didn't really ever go away, and, in a sense, become a part of me, imbedded in my mind with the help of techniques such as hypnosis. In essence, what was happening was a

form of brainwashing. My whole childhood (the real one) was taken from me—erased and replaced with a horror story.

Before therapy, I was on my way to becoming a successful hairdresser in San Francisco and was happy in other areas of my life. As the therapy progressed I could no longer work and was forced to go on social security disability. After being put on disability, I had more time to devote to my "healing." I started to go to ritual abuse survivors anonymous meetings and incest survivors anonymous meetings. These groups were a collective of individuals all basically suffering from FMS.

The "memories" were contagious. One person would have a specific memory one week and the next week someone else had a similar memory. I believed that "if I am in denial about something then I need to work harder on my "healing."" That led to more "memories."

The pattern was: memory, feeling of disbelief or denial, work on healing, more memories. There seemed no escape. Both my therapist and the group members all said the same thing. Now I can see this as a classic example of group hysteria. People prone to hysteria are highly suggestible and subject to external stimuli. These groups became much like a cult—with a closed system of thought and a cyclic thought pattern

I divorced myself from my family. I made harassing phone calls to my family blaming them for things that never happened. I went to several dissociative disorder units, one in Colorado, and another in Belmont Shores California. These hospitals were invested in healing from child abuse, especially ritual abuse. What damage all of this caused! Because I was on disability, my Medicare lifetime hospitalization days were used up. I was close to suicide. It's difficult for me to emphasize enough the terrible harm that FMS caused me and my

family who thought I had died. This was a frightening period of my life.

What happened that helped me get out of my terrible therapy was that one day I saw a *San Francisco Examiner* article on False Memory Syndrome. I had gotten a bunch of phone calls from group members warning me not to read the article (actually a week-long series.) I was hesitant at first, but I had suffered from these "memories" for so long, and had already begun to think that something was really wrong, so I read the newspaper. The articles saved my life. They came along at the nick of time. I saw in black and white what was happening to me. I called the journalist who wrote the articles, Stephanie Salter. I will forever cherish her in my heart as a champion for me to get better. Slowly—very slowly—I started to undo the damage. I worked with an incredible psychiatrist who did not buy the DID diagnosis and who helped to "deprogram" me.

The miracle in all of this is that I am a *whole* person today. I no longer see my self as 60 people. Pain from any trauma is difficult and for an FMS survivor, there is not much help. Thank God for the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, for they were able to talk to me on a regular basis and give me some semblance of reality and sanity as well. God bless them!

The hope for people dealing with this problem now is the extensive data that has been collected on memory, retrieval of memories, hysteria, suggestibility, and the heated and controversial issue of Multiple Personalities. Since the end of the FMS nightmare, I have found a great deal of peace. Being older and wiser, I see the truth a whole lot clearer. When younger people especially are brought into an environment of both coercion and manipulative tactics with their "well being" at stake, they don't see it or at least I didn't. Perhaps some who are easily suggestible do come from some form of family dysfunction and are more easily

swayed in that they (or rather I did anyway) see that there is a forum to both vent anger and get approval.

Today, I am a psychology student and my primary reason for getting into the field, besides my avid interest in the human mind, is to help those who are afflicted by FMS. In my recovery I have had to guide a therapist or two with some basic knowledge but not enough. They were able to guide me through the feelings and the pain to get to a sense of closure. If I were to have one wish, it would be to put False Memory Syndrome in the DSM4 as an actual diagnosis. It clearly has a set of symptoms.

I want to give hope to both families and victims of this nightmare. Life is a beautiful thing that is to be cherished and celebrated. I have found that whatever pain I have been through in life brings growth as well. FMS has given me a deeper and greater understanding of myself and of the human condition as a whole. I know that there has been some sort of Higher Power at work in my life. For anyone going through this, I want you to know that there is an end and a new beginning. Holding on to that belief is imperative to walking through this.

If anyone needs to talk to someone who understands and who has been through this, please feel free to email me. My email address is ventura.vince@gmail.com. This is for both parents and for those who may be questioning or recovering from FMS. I am offering this merely a listener and if you may want some input that is fine with me as well. I am not a clinician (yet) but I do have experience, strength and hope to give. I hope this article is a help to anyone curious, in need, afflicted by this presently, or moving onward.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. It was indeed an honor to write.

Vince Ventura



Web Sites of Interest

<http://www.theisticsatanism.com/asp/>
Against Satanic Panics

comp.uark.edu/~lampinen/read.html
The Lampinen Lab False Memory Reading Group,
University of Arkansas

www.exploratorium.edu/memory/
The Exploratorium Memory Exhibit

www.tmdArchives.org
The Memory Debate Archives

www.francefms.com
French language website

www.psychoheresy-aware.org/ministry.html
The Bobgans question Christian counseling

www.IllinoisFMS.org
Illinois-Wisconsin FMS Society

www.ltech.net/OHIOarmhp
Ohio Group

www.afma.asn.au
Australian False Memory Association

www.bfms.org.uk
British False Memory Society

www.geocities.com/retractor
This site is run by Laura Pasley (retractor)

www.sirs.com/uptonbooks/index.htm
Upton Books

www.angelfire.com/tx/recoveredmemories/
Locate books about FMS
Recovered Memory Bookstore

www.religioustolerance.org/sra.htm
Information about Satanic Ritual Abuse

www.angryparents.net
Parents Against Cruel Therapy

www.geocities.com/newcosanz
New Zealand FMS Group

www.peterellis.org.nz
Site run by Brian Robinson contains information about Christchurch Creche and other cases.

www.werkgroepwfh.nl
Netherlands FMS Group

www.falseallegation.org
National Child Abuse
Defense & Resource Center

www.nasw.org/users/markp
Excerpts from *Victims of Memory*

www.rickross.com/groups/fsm.html
Ross Institute

www.enigma.se/info/FFI.htm
FMS in Scandanavia - Janet Hagbom

www.ncrj.org/
National Center for Reason & Justice

www.lyingspirits.com

Skeptical Information on Theophostic Counseling

www.ChildrenInTherapy.org/

Information about Attachment Therapy

www.traumaversterking.nl

English language web site of Dutch retractor.

www.quackwatch.org

This site is run by Stephen Barrett, M.D.

www.stopbadtherapy.org

Contains information about filing complaints.

www.FMSFonline.org

Web site of FMS Foundation.

Legal Web Sites of Interest

- www.caseassist.com
- www.findlaw.com
- www.legalengine.com
- www.accused.com

Elizabeth Loftus

www.seweb.uci.edu/faculty/loftus/

The Rutherford Family Speaks to FMS Families

The DVD made by the Rutherford family is *the* most popular DVD of FMSF families. It covers the complete story from accusation, to retraction and reconciliation. Family members describe the things they did to cope and to help reunite. Of particular interest are Beth Rutherford's comments about what her family did that helped her to retract and return.

Available in DVD format only:

To order send request to

FMSF -DVD, 1955 Locust St.

Philadelphia, PA 19103

\$10.00 per DVD; Canada add \$4.00;

other countries add \$10.00

Make checks payable to FMS
Foundation

Recommended Books

Remembering Trauma

Richard McNally

Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology

S. O. Lilienfeld, S.J. Lynn, J.M. Lohr (eds.)

Psychology Astray:

Fallacies in Studies of "Repressed Memory" and Childhood Trauma

by Harrison G. Pope, Jr., M.D.

CONTACTS & MEETINGS - UNITED STATES

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See Georgia

ALASKA

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Phoenix

Pat 480-396-9420

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Al & Lela 870-363-4368

CALIFORNIA

Sacramento

Jocelyn 530-570-1862

San Francisco & North Bay

Charles 415-435-9618

San Francisco & South Bay

Eric 408-738-0469

East Bay Area

Judy 925-952-4853

Central Coast

Carole 805-967-8058

Palm Desert

Eileen and Jerry 909-659-9636

Central Orange County

Chris & Alan 949-733-2925

Covina Area

Floyd & Libby 626-357-2750

San Diego Area

Dee 760-439-4630

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Colorado Springs

Doris 719-488-9738

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S. New England

Paul 203-458-9173

FLORIDA

Dade/Broward

Madeline 954-966-4FMS

Central Florida - Please call for mtg. time

John & Nancy 352-750-5446

Sarasota

Francis & Sally 941-342-8310

Tampa Bay Area

Bob & Janet 727-856-7091

GEORGIA

Atlanta

Wallie & Jill 770-971-8917

ILLINOIS

Chicago & Suburbs - 1st Sun. (MO)

Eileen 847-985-7693 or

Liz & Roger 847-827-1056

Peoria

Bryant & Lynn 309-674-2767

INDIANA

Indiana Assn. for Responsible Mental

Health Practices

Pat 317-865-8913

Helen 574-753-2779

KANSAS

Wichita - Meeting as called

Pat 785-762-2825

KENTUCKY

Louisville- Last Sun. (MO) @ 2pm

Bob 502-367-1838

LOUISIANA

Sarah 337-235-7656

MAINE

Rumford

Carolyn 207-364-8891

Portland - 4th Sun. (MO)

Bobby 207-878-9812

MASSACHUSETTS/NEW ENGLAND

Andover - 2nd Sun. (MO) @ 1pm

Frank 978-263-9795

MICHIGAN

Greater Detroit Area

Nancy 248-642-8077

Ann Arbor

Martha 734-439-4055

MINNESOTA

Terry & Collette 507-642-3630

Dan & Joan 651-631-2247

MISSOURI

Kansas City - Meeting as called

Pat 785-738-4840

Springfield - Quarterly (4th Sat. of Apr.,

Jul., Oct., Jan.) @12:30pm

Tom 417-753-4878

Roxie 417-781-2058

MONTANA

Lee & Avone 406-443-3189

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jean 603-772-2269

Mark 802-872-0847

NEW JERSEY

Sally 609-927-4147 (Southern)

Nancy 973-729-1433 (Northern)

NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque - 2nd Sat. (BI-MO) @1 pm

Southwest Room -Presbyterian Hospital

Maggie 505-662-7521(after 6:30pm) or

Sy 505-758-0726

NEW YORK

Westchester, Rockland, etc.

Barbara 914-922-1737

Upstate/Albany Area

Elaine 518-399-5749

NORTH CAROLINA

Susan 704-538-7202

OHIO

Cleveland

Bob & Carole 440-356-4544

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City

Dee 405-942-0531 or

Tulsa

Jim 918-582-7363

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Portland area

Kathy 503-655-1587

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Harrisburg

Paul & Betty 717-691-7660

Pittsburgh

Rick & Renee 412-563-5509

Montrose

John 570-278-2040

Wayne (includes S. NJ)

Jim & Jo 610-783-0396

TENNESSEE

Nashville

Kate 615-665-1160

TEXAS

Houston

Jo or Beverly 713-464-8970

El Paso

Mary Lou 915-595-2966

UTAH

Keith 801-467-0669

VERMONT

Mark 802-872-0847

WASHINGTON

See Oregon

WISCONSIN

Katie & Leo 414-476-0285 or

Susanne & John 608-427-3686

WYOMING

Alan & Lorinda 307-322-4170

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Victoria & Vancouver Island

John 250-721-3219

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UNITED KINGDOM

The British False Memory Society

Madeline 44-1225 868-682

Deadline for the Springr 2008 issue is March 15. Meeting notices **MUST** be in writing and should be sent no later than **two months before meeting.**

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if you wish to receive electronic versions of this newsletter and notices of radio and television broadcasts about FMS. All the message need say is "add to the FMS-News". It would be useful, but not necessary, if you add your full name (all addresses and names will remain strictly confidential).

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